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SHIFTING THE BALANCE

A New Approach to Program Review



CALIFORNIA
POSTSECONDARY
EDUCATION
COMMISSION

SUMMARY

In June 1992, the staff of the Commission discussed with the Commission's Educational Policy and Programs Committee the need to rethink the way in which the Commission fulfills its responsibility for reviewing proposals from California's public systems of higher education for new degree and certificate programs. After extensive consultation with the Intersegmental Program Review Council, which consists of experts in program planning and evaluation, the staff developed the plan outlined in this report.

The basic changes in the Commission's work as proposed in the report are three: (1) the Commission will focus its review efforts at the *beginning* of the systems' own review of proposals for new programs, rather than waiting until the systems have completed their planning for the programs, (2) the primary concerns of the Commission will shift from issues *particular* to a specific proposed program to issues regarding the place of the proposed program in the entire spectrum of existing and proposed offerings in higher education in California, and (3) the role of the Commission at the end of the planning process will shift from a formal review of the *program* to verifying that the campus and system have been responsive to the questions raised initially by the Commission and the Intersegmental Program Review Council. Through this process, the Commission staff believes the Commission's review of program proposals will be far more useful in benefiting the systems and ultimately their students.

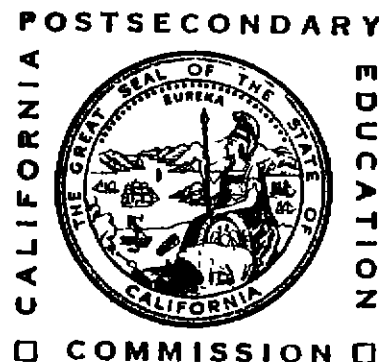
The plan received enthusiastic endorsement when it was discussed by the Educational Policy and Programs Committee of the Commission at its meeting on December 7, 1992. Further information about the report may be obtained from the Commission at 1303 J Street, Suite 500, Sacramento, California 95814-2938.

SHIFTING THE BALANCE

A NEW APPROACH TO PROGRAM REVIEW

*Planned Improvements in the Commission's
Review of Proposals for New Programs*

CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION
1303 J Street ♦ Fifth Floor ♦ Sacramento, California 95814-2938





COMMISSION REPORT 92-32
PUBLISHED DECEMBER 1992

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SHIFTING THE BALANCE: A NEW APPROACH TO PROGRAM REVIEW

AS THE State's coordinating agency for postsecondary education, the California Postsecondary Education Commission is responsible for representing the public interest and serving the public good. It alone is charged with examining those issues that affect all of the public colleges and universities in the State and has no specific institutional constituency to frame its viewpoint.

As the State confronts for the second straight year a budget shortfall of epic proportions and its institutions struggle to meet the promises both explicit and implicit in California's Master Plan, the Commission must continue to ensure that the citizens of California have access to the best possible education within the resources provided. Thus the Commission's ongoing interest in the planning and coordination of educational programs offered by the University of California, the California State University, and the California Community Colleges has been deepened by the present confluence of decreasing resources and increasing high school graduation rates, student preparation, and concomitant eligibility for college. Never has there been a more auspicious time to rethink the ways that the State and its institutions of higher education do business so that, despite the vise of rapidly expanding student numbers and severely constrained budgets, continuing quality, comprehensiveness, and currency in program offerings may be assured.

The Commission's mandate

The Donahoe Higher Education Act (Section 66903 of the Education Code) identifies 20 specific functions and responsibilities of the Commission, the following of which are either directly or indirectly related to the review of academic programs:

- 1 It shall require the governing boards of the segments of public postsecondary education to develop and submit to the commission institutional and systemwide long-range plans
- 2 It shall prepare a five-year state plan for postsecondary education which shall integrate the planning efforts of the public segments and other pertinent plans. The commission shall seek to resolve conflicts or inconsistencies among segmental plans in consultation with

the segments In developing such a plan the commission shall consider at least the following factors (a) the need for and location of new facilities, (b) the range and kinds of programs appropriate to each institution or system, (c) the budgetary priorities of the institutions and systems of postsecondary education, (g) the educational programs and resources of private postsecondary institutions, and (h) the provisions of this division differentiating the functions of the public systems of higher education

6 It shall review proposals by the public segments for new programs and make recommendations regarding such proposals to the Legislature and the Governor

7 It shall, in consultation with the public segments, establish a schedule for segmental review of selected educational programs, evaluate the program review processes of the segments, and report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature

8 It shall serve as a stimulus to the segments and institutions of postsecondary education by projecting and identifying societal and educational needs and encouraging adaptability to change

9 It shall develop and submit plans to the Legislature and the Governor for the funding and administration of a program to encourage innovative educational programs by institutions of postsecondary education

10 It shall collect or conduct or both collect and conduct studies of projected manpower supply and demand, in cooperation with appropriate state agencies, and disseminate the results of such studies to institutions of postsecondary education and to the public in order to improve the information base upon which student choices are made

11 It shall periodically review and make recommendations concerning the need for and availability of postsecondary programs for adult and continuing education

12 It shall develop criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of all aspects of postsecondary education

13 It shall maintain and update annually an inventory of all off-campus programs and facilities for education, research and community service operated by public and private institutions of postsecondary education

17 It shall consider the relationships between academic and occupational and vocational education programs and shall actively en-

courage the participation of state and local and public and private persons and agencies with a direct interest in these areas

Meeting the charge

Since its inception, the Commission has focused its program review efforts primarily on the review of new programs as required in Item 6 of the Donahoe Act. In its current form, that process works as follows:

1. The University of California and the California State University annually submit to the Commission lists of academic programs projected to begin over the next five years in each system. The California Community Colleges do not currently submit such a list.
2. Commission staff selects a number of these projected programs for individual review based on the seven criteria used for over a decade to guide the Commission's overall proposal review process for both undergraduate and graduate degree programs: (1) student demand, (2) societal needs, (3) appropriateness to institutional and segmental mission, (4) number of existing and proposed programs in the field, (5) total costs of the program, (6) maintenance and improvement of quality, and (7) the advancement of knowledge. The staff lists these programs each year in its report to the Commission on program review activities.
3. After the proposal for each selected program is approved by campus and systemwide authorities, the system's office then submits it for Commission staff review. Using the criteria listed above, the staff either concurs, asks for additional information, or does not concur with the system's recommendation for approval of the program. The differentiation between concurrence and approval exists because the Commission, in its advisory rather than regulatory capacity, does not have the authority to approve programs, except for joint doctoral degree programs between the California State University and independent institutions.
4. Since the Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges does not submit a list of projected programs to the Commission, staff reviews all proposals from that system.
5. The University of California and the California State University also annually submit a summary of findings from campus reviews of existing academic programs -- a process that occurs for each program every five to seven years. Although the Chancellor's Office for the community colleges does not yet summarize the findings of such reviews on community college campuses, it submitted a report in 1991 describing the processes currently in place.
6. Commission staff prepares an annual report to the Commission about these projected programs, proposed programs, and the systems' review of existing programs.

Rationale for change Academic planning clearly moves through a logical progression, from projected programs to proposed programs to implemented programs, which are regularly reviewed and then presumably discontinued for programmatic, fiscal, or other reasons. The Commission staff has focused its efforts near the mid-point of this continuum, commenting on proposed new programs after campuses have worked several years on developing them and after these programs have been officially approved at the campus and system-wide levels. This process has placed the agency in a position of reacting to proposals on a piecemeal basis and raising issues at a time when it would be quite difficult to reshape the program in response. In addition, this *ad seriatim* process has neither allowed any examination of the integration, articulation, or comprehensiveness of the curriculum as a whole nor taken into consideration the best use or management of State resources.

When resources were plentiful and campuses were growing, the current approach may have been sufficient. Today it is not, so the Commission and systems have had to face the question of how best to use their resources and expertise to ensure that the public is well-served by current and future educational programs. The Commission staff, in cooperation with the Intersegmental Program Review Council (IPRC) that consists of representatives from the three public systems and the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities and serves in an advisory capacity to the staff, is proposing to reshape the current proposal review process in a way that will allow the Commission to respond more fully to both the letter and the spirit of its enabling legislation.

Potential for change For the past several months Commission staff has worked with the Intersegmental Program Review Council to reformulate the overall approach to its proposal review activities. While the short-term goal may be to conserve resources by decreasing the time and effort put into individual proposals by the Commission staff, more important goals have to do with quality issues. For example:

- ♦ The overall effectiveness of the review process will be enhanced by shifting Commission emphasis from later in the process to the beginning when raising statewide interests, concerns, and priorities will have more impact.
- ♦ Intersegmental collaboration will be strengthened by placing academic programs in an intersegmental context through a truly intersegmental review that has the potential to improve program and degree articulation and also lead to more innovative programming and delivery systems.
- ♦ Time will be available for the Commission staff to deal more proactively

with the other program review functions stipulated in the originating legislation

- Better linkages can be forged between the Commission's program review function and such other central Commission foci as access, transfer, eligibility, facilities and finance
- And finally, the process may also allow larger issues about curriculum and instruction to rise to the surface for intersegmental discussion

Proposal for change

Based upon the same principles of simplicity, flexibility, accountability, and consensus that undergird the Commission's work on space and utilization standards (Storey, 1990), the process outlined below has the full support of the members of the Intersegmental Program Review Council. The five major elements of the proposed system include the following:

1. Commission staff will convene an annual meeting of the Council to review all projected programs from the University and State University. Although the California Community Colleges do not presently submit a list of projected programs to the Commission, Chancellor's Office staff is revising its current operating procedures, and the potential of the system's full participation in this revised process is discussed below.
2. Commission staff will focus on raising questions when the programs initially appear on the projected programs' list. Although the Commission reserves the right to request status reports, ask further questions at any time during a program's development, and to review individual programs when the proposal is fully developed, if such review appears warranted, it is anticipated that for most programs, only the process and not the specific proposal will be reviewed at the end.
3. The Intersegmental Program Review Council will have the opportunity to discuss larger issues related to academic programs such as enrollment demand and fiscal constraints and may identify areas needing further study either by the Commission or the systems.
4. Commission efforts in such areas as fiscal planning, master planning, enrollment planning, transfer, eligibility, and facilities will be linked, when appropriate, with academic programming issues.
5. The Commission staff will explore the feasibility of expanding its work in the areas recommended by the original legislation. This shift in emphasis is all the more essential because of the issues currently facing postsecondary education.

These elements represent several significant changes to the Commission's current operating procedures.

- ♦ First, Commission staff will become involved at the beginning of the program review process, and the primary concerns of the Commission will shift from issues particular to a specific program to issues regarding the place of the proposed program in the entire spectrum of existing and proposed offerings in higher education in California
- ♦ Second, proposals for new programs will take into account statewide priorities, questions, and concerns
- ♦ Third, the Commission staff will work with the Intersegmental Program Review Council to examine projected programs and to discuss larger issues related to academic program planning
- ♦ Fourth, the role of the Commission staff at the end of the process will shift from a formal review of the program to verifying that the proposal prepared by the campus and reviewed by the system has been responsive to the questions raised at the outset
- ♦ Fifth and finally, academic program planning will inform other Commission studies where appropriate, and other work related to program review may be incorporated in the Commission's annual workplan

**Implementation
of change**

The new process will involve Commission staff's calling an annual meeting of the Intersegmental Program Review Council during which its members will focus solely on projected programs. At this meeting, each new program will be reviewed on the basis of its appropriateness to institutional mission, student demand, the needs of the state of California and the nation, and possible cost. The place of the program amid the entire spectrum of offerings in the State will also be considered as will whether equally valuable results could be obtained in other, less expensive ways -- such as expanding existing programs, offering such a program jointly, using educational technology, and the like. At this initial meeting, agreement will be sought on questions that should be answered persuasively by the proposing campus if the proposal is to receive approval by the system and final concurrence by the Commission, the types of evidence that will be considered acceptable by the Commission, any larger implications of the answers, and the possible necessity of interim status reports.

The proposing campus will then be informed by the systemwide office about the nature of these discussions. From that point onward, the staff of either the University or the State University will have the responsibility for verifying that the campus has done an acceptable job of responding to such issues as cost, better estimates for student demand, campus reallocation of resources to meet the needs of the program, and whatever other issues were raised at the meeting.

When the program proposal is in its final form -- the point at which it is presently reviewed on an individual basis by Commission staff -- the system will send the proposal to Commission staff for review of the process and verification that the concerns set out at the initial meeting have been addressed. In the meantime, Commission staff, with the advice of the Intersegmental Program Review Council, will develop a checklist geared to the earlier questions for use at this stage.

The role of the community colleges in this new process must be determined. The Chancellor's Office is still developing its capacity to acquire the necessary information from the individual campuses regarding all stages of the program review continuum. In the short-term, the Chancellor's Office will focus its planning efforts on clusters of programs and discuss the emphases, balance, and patterns within the system. In the long-term, however, Commission staff continues to urge that as soon as possible the community colleges provide three-to-five-year projections on academic programs just as the University and State University do.

**Anticipated benefits
of change**

From a public policy perspective, the procedural change being proposed should improve the process currently employed by the Commission in its review of new academic programs submitted by the three public segments. The new process will focus the Commission's efforts on an earlier stage of program planning and allow questions to be raised before the campus and system invest years of time, energy, and resources in developing a new program. It will allow the Commission to examine new programs at what Frank Bowen and Lyman Glenny have referred to as "a level of aggregation and generality that is appropriate for consideration of statewide concerns that cross segmental boundaries" (1981, p. 53).

Elevating academic program review to this new level of generality will assuredly lead to fruitful avenues of collaboration between the Commission and the systems. For example, the questions asked may lay the groundwork for intersegmental reviews of existing programs -- reviews the Commission has recommended for years but on which no agreement has ever been reached with the systems. The Commission will also work with the systems to improve the Commission's database about educational programs, including vocational/occupational programs, so that the Commission can produce a comprehensive inventory of programs by system and across systems, as well as more precise information about enrollments and degrees conferred. These data would no doubt be exceedingly useful during the joint Commission/Council review of projected programs. Such data, together with manpower studies on emerging needs, have the potential to assist the segments and their campuses in determining programmatic priorities, and would also provide the basis for another Commission study on major gains and losses in various

academic disciplines, the last being issued in 1987. The Commission might also better incorporate academic program data and issues in its studies on graduate and undergraduate education, long range human resource needs, student flow, equity, time to degree, curricular integration and innovation, and educational technology.

Timeline for change

With the consent of the Commission, the next steps in this process will begin in January 1993 when Commission staff and members of the Intersegmental Program Review Council will meet to begin the phase-in of the new approach to program review by devising the preliminary list of questions that should be asked of the campuses which submit program proposals, coming to agreement on who should ask the questions, at what stage, with what documentation, and potential implications of the response. If the plan proposed in this document is approved at the February Commission meeting, the first attempt will be made by Commission staff and the Council to apply the new process to the most recent five-year list of proposed programs during March 1993. By January 1994, an assessment of the process will be made and modifications proposed for future program review activities. The existing process for program review will be in effect until all program proposals that are sufficiently far enough along in the pipeline as to make this conceptual review inappropriate have been submitted for concurrence.

Issues regarding change

If the new process is to work effectively, Commission staff and representatives of the systems should continue to consult and cooperate as they have over the last several months. In this regard:

- ♦ The Chancellor's Office of the California Community Colleges should move as quickly as possible to provide a list of projected programs.
- ♦ Undergraduate degree programs should be included on the University of California's projected programs' list, just as they are for the State University.
- ♦ The need for information about academic programs in the independent institutions is crucial to the public segments and to statewide planning. Although the obstacles to obtaining it are formidable, discussions should continue with the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities.

Furthermore, some matters cannot be delegated to the Intersegmental Program Review Council:

- ♦ By statute, only the Commission is empowered to approve joint doctorates between the California State University and independent institutions, and those proposed between the University and State University are sufficiently rare to permit continuing detailed final review by the Com-

mission staff, even though planning questions will be directed to the campuses at an earlier stage

- ♦ Finally, although the new process is designed to be intersegmental and collaborative, the Commission is bound by its legislation and can in no way abrogate its ultimate responsibilities

Conclusion Legislative Analyst Elizabeth Hill pointed out on November 6 at the annual conference meeting of the California Association for Institutional Research that several central issues regarding academic programs are becoming increasingly important

- ♦ Should campuses specialize, rather than be comprehensive?
- ♦ Should campuses be explicitly trying to meet the needs of the State?
- ♦ How are decisions made on what courses and programs are being offered?

Such an inquiry made in a public forum may well signal increasing interest on the part of the Legislative Analyst's Office, the Legislature, and others on these matters. Shifting the balance as this plan recommends -- from the middle of the process to the beginning, from an exclusively Commission-directed model to an intersegmental one, from a focus on individual programs to the whole of academic programming within and across systems, from a strictly programmatic focus to an arena of multiple issues -- will put both the Commission and the systems in a better position to respond to similar questions posed both internally and by the external constituencies they serve

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-- "Needed: A New Approach to Program Review." Commission Agenda Item 12, May 31-June 1 Meeting, Sacramento, California

Storey, William L. "Applying Occam's Razor: Space and Utilization Standards in California." A Presentation to the Society for College and University Planning, July 31, 1990, Atlanta, Georgia

CALIFORNIA POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION

THE California Postsecondary Education Commission is a citizen board established in 1974 by the Legislature and Governor to coordinate the efforts of California's colleges and universities and to provide independent, non-partisan policy analysis and recommendations to the Governor and Legislature

Members of the Commission

The Commission consists of 17 members. Nine represent the general public, with three each appointed for six-year terms by the Governor, the Senate Rules Committee, and the Speaker of the Assembly. Six others represent the major segments of postsecondary education in California. Two student members are appointed by the Governor.

As of April 1995, the Commissioners representing the general public are

Henry Der, San Francisco, *Chair*
Guillermo Rodriguez, Jr., San Francisco, *Vice Chair*
Elaine Alquist, Santa Clara
Mim Andelson, Los Angeles
C. Thomas Dean, Long Beach
Jeffrey I. Marston, San Diego
Melinda G. Wilson, Torrance
Linda J. Wong, Los Angeles
Ellen F. Wright, Saratoga

Representatives of the segments are

Roy T. Brophy, Fair Oaks, appointed by the Regents of the University of California,
Yvonne W. Larsen, San Diego, appointed by the California State Board of Education,
Alice Petrossian, Glendale, appointed by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges,
Ted J. Saenger, San Francisco, appointed by the Trustees of the California State University,
Kyhl Smeby, Pasadena, appointed by the Governor to represent California's independent colleges and universities, and
Frank R. Martinez, San Luis Obispo, appointed by the Council for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education

The two student representatives are
Stephen Leshner, Meadow Vista
Beverly A. Sandeen, Costa Mesa

Functions of the Commission

The Commission is charged by the Legislature and Governor to "assure the effective utilization of public postsecondary education resources, thereby eliminating waste and unnecessary duplication, and to promote diversity, innovation, and responsiveness to student and societal needs."

To this end, the Commission conducts independent reviews of matters affecting the 2,600 institutions of postsecondary education in California, including community colleges, four-year colleges, universities, and professional and occupational schools.

As an advisory body to the Legislature and Governor, the Commission does not govern or administer any institutions, nor does it approve, authorize, or accredit any of them. Instead, it performs its specific duties of planning, evaluation, and coordination by cooperating with other State agencies and non-governmental groups that perform those other governing, administrative, and assessment functions.

Operation of the Commission

The Commission holds regular meetings throughout the year at which it debates and takes action on staff studies and takes positions on proposed legislation affecting education beyond the high school in California. By law, its meetings are open to the public. Requests to speak at a meeting may be made by writing the Commission in advance or by submitting a request before the start of the meeting.

The Commission's day-to-day work is carried out by its staff in Sacramento, under the guidance of its executive director, Warren Halsey Fox, Ph.D., who is appointed by the Commission.

Further information about the Commission and its publications may be obtained from the Commission offices at 1303 J Street, Suite 500, Sacramento, California 95814-2938, telephone (916) 445-7933.

SHIFTING THE BALANCE: A New Approach to Program Review

Commission Report 92-32



ONE of a series of reports published by the California Postsecondary Education Commission as part of its planning and coordinating responsibilities. Single copies may be obtained without charge from the Commission at 1303 J Street, Suite 500, Sacramento, California 95814-2938. Recent reports include

- 93-1 *Legislative and State Budget Priorities of the Commission, 1993 A Report of the California Postsecondary Education Commission* (February 1993)
- 93-2 *Expenditures for University Instruction A Report to the Governor and Legislature in Response to Supplemental Report Language for the 1991 Budget Act* (April 1993)
- 93-3 *Faculty Salaries in California's Public Universities A Report to the Legislature and the Governor in Response to Concurrent Resolution No. 51 (1965)* (April 1993)
- 93-4 *Executive Compensation in California's Public Universities, 1992-93 A Report to the Governor and Legislature in Response to the 1992 Budget Act* (April 1993)
- 93-5 *Status Report on Human Corps Activities, 1992 The Last in a Series of Five Progress Reports to the Legislature in Response to Assembly Bill 1820 (Chapter 1245, Statutes of 1987)* (April 1993)
- 93-6 *The Master Plan, Then and Now Policies of the 1960-1975 Master Plan for Higher Education in Light of 1993 Realities* (April 1993)
- 93-7 *The Restructuring of California's Financial Aid Programs and Its Short-Term Aid Policy Recommendations of the California Postsecondary Education Commission* (April 1993)
- 93-8 *Undergraduate Student Charges and Short-Term Financial Aid Policies at California's Public Universities Recommendations of the California Postsecondary Education Commission* (April 1993) [Superseded by Report 93-9]
- 93-9 *A New State Policy on Undergraduate Student Charges at California's Public Universities Recommendations of the California Postsecondary Education Commission* (June 1993)
- 93-10 *A Dream Deferred California's Waning Higher Education Opportunities A Statement by the California Postsecondary Education Commission* (June 1993)
- 93-11 *Student Fees and Fee Policy at the California Maritime Academy A Report to the Governor and Legislature in Response to Supplemental Report Language of the 1992 Budget Act* (June 1993)
- 93-12 *Proposed Establishment of the Vacaville Higher Education Center of the Solano County Community College District A Report to the Governor and Legislature in Response to a Request from the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges* (June 1993)
- 93-13 *Major Gains and Losses, 1986-87 to 1991-92 A Report on Shifts in the Popularity of Various Academic Disciplines as Fields of Study at California's Public Universities* (June 1993)